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SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE RICHARD WILLIAMSON, S/CRS, NSC
FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON, D (GDELGADO)
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNAMID OFFICIAL SAYS GOS NEITHER HELPING NOR HARMING
DEPLOYMENT

REFTEL: KHARTOUM 41

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a January 15 conversation with FieldOff, United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Chief of Integrated Support Services (CISS) did not paint a picture of outright Government of Sudan (GoS) obstructionism to UNAMID deployment. Instead, the CISS reported that the GoS was neither helping nor hindering UNAMID's progress. Recent conversations in Khartoum with government officials also reflect this mixed assessment (see comment). The CISS was not optimistic that the Chinese and Bangladeshi units of the Heavy Support Package would deploy by January 20 as predicted, although the Fragmentation Order for their deployment is expected within the next 24 hours. Blame for slow deployment seems equally divided between the GOS and UNAMID elements themselves. END SUMMARY.

SOFA

¶2. (SBU) The CISS reported no real movement on the UNAMID Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the GoS. He did note, however, that the GoS refused to renew visas for some UN staff during the past week. The GoS allegedly argued that these staff, working for UNMIS on behalf of UNAMID, should have submitted their renewal requests on UNAMID vice UNMIS letterhead.

NIGHT FLIGHTS

¶3. (SBU) While the CISS confirmed that the GoS was nominally allowing UNAMID to fly at night, particularly in the case of medical evacuations, the GoS is requiring a signed paper indemnifying against liabilities in the case of flying without lights. The CISS said UNAMID would engage the Sudanese Civil Aviation Association on this issue, which he predicted would be resolved by a UNAMID-funded upgrade of the lighting systems at Darfur airports.

LAND ISSUES

¶4. (SBU) The CISS reported no real movement on the issue of UNAMID land procurement from the GoS in Darfur. He was optimistic, as he has expressed in the past, that an agreement on West Darfur land would be reached and that it would not become a matter of money. He noted that flights were re-starting east to west between El Geneina, Kulbus and Tine after having been halted due to West Darfur insecurity caused by rebel groups, and bombing by both Chadian and Sudanese aircraft, a resumption that could facilitate finalization of the land question in El Geneina.

HSP UPDATE

¶5. (SBU) The CISS was not optimistic that the Chinese and Bangladeshi units of the HSP, bolstered by a Nigerian battalion,

would deploy to the "Green Field" to begin construction of the super camp by January 20. This view contradicts a statement by the UNAMID Chief of Staff (COS) in the January 16 UNAMID Morning Brief that the Fragmentation Order for this deployment would be issued within the next 24 hours. The CISS noted that the Chinese had engineered a new set of conditions to delay deployment. The latest, according to the CISS, is that the Chinese cannot move their containers due to lack of access roads. Correcting this problem will require UNAMID to bring in commercial contractors. [NOTE: To be fair, the UNAMID COS also identified this issue as a credible obstacle in the January 16 briefing. END NOTE]. The CISS predicted, however, that once PAE's contract extension expires on January 23, the Chinese and Bangladeshi units would be without food and would be forced to move from the PAE camp where they have been accommodated since their arrival.

¶6. (SBU) The CISS and the COS confirmed that an Egyptian infantry battalion would be the next TCC arrival in Darfur. The CISS stressed that it is incumbent upon UN Headquarters in New York to ensure that the battalion arrives in country fully equipped, to avoid another China-Bangladesh scenario.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Recent conversations with government officials in Khartoum also indicate a push-pull approach by the GoS regarding UNAMID deployment. State Minister al-Samani al-Wasila, in conversations with PDAS Linda Thomas-Greenfield (reftel), denied that the government was obstructing the SOFA, saying that UNAMID had yet to present new terms for the agreement. Regarding land, al-Samani said that the GoS had offered several plots of land in El Geneina to UNAMID, but all had been rejected. While the government - whether through its typically slow bureaucracy or through politically-inspired machinations - certainly puts obstacles in UNAMID's path, the truth, as usual, probably lies somewhere in the middle. UNAMID seems quite capable of "going slow" on its own

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without the Sudanese and the Khartoum regime is only grudgingly moving towards facilitation of the deployment.

¶8. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ